

NATIONAL CAVE AND KARST RESEARCH INSTITUTE

MONTHLY UPDATE FOR SEPTEMBER 2003

PROGRESS MADE BY THE INSTITUTE STAFF AND PARTNERS THIS MONTH:

- Penny Boston (PB) attended the Sixth International Mars Society Conference and provided an interview to *Space.com* magazine (available at: http://www.space.com/scienceastronomy/mars_caves_030905.html)
- Lewis Land (LL) conducted underwater (scuba diving) investigation of bottom conditions in gypsum cenotes at Bottomless Lakes State Park, Chaves Co., NM, to determine potential for future coring activities. These sinkhole lakes have high salinities, potentially preventing most bioturbation. The sediments might, thus, be varved, possibly preserving a record of Holocene climate variations. Varves could be correlated with the climate record preserved in speleothems from caves in the Guadalupe Mountains.
- LL gave an interview for KTEP, the local public radio station in El Paso, discussing several aspects of caves, karst research, the WIPP site, and the Institute with interviewer Keith Pannell, a University of Texas-El Paso professor.
- LL gave a presentation at University of Texas-El Paso earth science department: "Role of Caves and Karst Processes in Regional Hydrology of Southeastern New Mexico"
- LL and Louise Hose (LH) developed a list of proposed research activities in Ft Stanton Cave to be submitted to BLM.
- The Institute staff and volunteers continued to work with the Japanese Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) on their science documentary project for high-definition television. Field assistance included 10 days by LH, 8 days by PB, and a total of 30 days by Institute volunteers during September. NHK is paying salary and all expenses for the Institute-provided assistance on this project.
- LH, PB, and Kathy Lavoie (SUNY-Plattsburgh) are investigating the potential of holding a *Friends of Karst* field conference in Tabasco, Mexico, in early 2005. The topic would focus on active hydrogen sulfide speleogenesis. LH met with Manuel Diaz and Carlos Montero of Mundo Maya concerning potential logistical support in the field.
- LH and Roger Scott (RS) met with Alan Moghissi, Betty Love, and Wren Prather-Stroud of the Institute for Regulatory Science, a Maryland-based, 501c.3 research operation with a presence in Carlsbad, concerning their possible support and advisement to the National Cave and Karst Research Institute.
- The three primary partners met in Carlsbad, mostly to discuss a General Agreement facilitating the transfer of allocated federal funds to the City for the Institute headquarters. Representatives at the meeting included LH and Roger Scott (RS) from the National Park Service, Van Romero and Richard Cervantes (New Mexico Tech), Jon Tully and Bob Forrest (Carlsbad), and State Representative John Heaton. Tully and LH also had an earlier meeting directed towards negotiating the General Agreement.
- RS organized logistics for the *Vision Building Workshop* (hotel, conference center reservations, facilitator needs etc.) and communicated with the invitees.

- LH, RS, Dave Shaver (NPS-GRD), and Ed Kassman (NPS-GRD) completed a background paper with extensive appendices concerning the Institute's history, legislative mandates, and upcoming challenges. PB and Dale Pate (NPS-CAVE) provided reviews of the first draft. This document was sent to all anticipated *Vision Building Workshop* attendees and other interested parties.
- RS designed and ordered an Institute banner to be used at promotional events.
- The New Mexico Geological Society board of directors formally approved the 2006 NMGS field conference – Caves and Karst of Southeastern New Mexico - proposed by LL, PB, and Bill Raatz, NMBGMR.
- LL attended a Roswell Geological Society half-day, short course on paleocave systems as reservoirs for oil and gas in the Ordovician Ellenberger formation taught by Bob Loucks, a geologist with the Texas Bureau of Economic Geology. After the course, LL, PB, and Carol Hill, UNM, discussed the proposed 2006 NMGS field conference.
- The Institute provided \$1000 in support of the National Cave and Karst Management Symposium.
- New Mexico Tech has begun reviewing applications for the Institute's Chief Scientist position (to be based in Carlsbad).
- LH fielded several inquiries that requested funding of cave and karst projects across the country. Currently, the Institute is not accepting grant proposal but hopes to have an application procedure and guidelines in place following the upcoming workshop and the hiring of our Chief Scientist.

PLANS: Anticipated activities for the near future include:

- In a continuing effort seeking broad input and investment towards development of the Institute, NCKRI plans a facilitator-run, 2-day meeting of a small (~20) but divert group of cave/karst program representatives on October 5th & 6th in Shepherdstown, WV, to discuss the Institute's operational & administrative vision. LEAD Alliance will provide a professional facilitator for the meeting. LH, Shaver (NPS-GRD), Kassman (NPS-GRD), PB, and other representatives of the Institute's three primary partners plan to attend.
- Following the workshop, the Institute hopes to move ahead toward writing a business/operations plan by the end of the year. This plan will include a proposal for how the Institute will be jointly administered.
- NMT will interview and hire a Chief Scientist for the Institute this fall.
- LH will attend the Karst Waters Institute's Epikarst Conference in Shepherdstown, WV, in early October, the National Cave and Karst Management Symposium in Gainesville, FL, in mid-October, and the Geological Society of America national meeting in Seattle, WA, in early November.

NCKRI STAFF:

LH – Louise Hose, National Park Service

RS – Roger Scott, National Park Service

LL – Lewis Land, New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources (NMBGMR)

PB – Penelope Boston, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology